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(54) Fail-safe control circuit.

(55) A fail-safe control circuit requires that all control units (1_1 - 1_n) produce identical control signals (A_1 - A_n) to operate a controlled device (4). The control units receive a feedback signal (C) used for comparing with the control signal (A_1 - A_n). When the control signal and the feedback signal do not match, a power supply interruption or disagreement signal (D_1 - D_n) causes a relay (8) to disconnect power to the controlled device (4) placing the controlled device in a fail-safe state.

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FAIL-SAFE CONTROL CIRCUIT

The present invention relates to a fail-safe control circuit for improving the controlling accuracy of a controlled device controlled by operation control units and, more particularly, the present invention is directed to a fail-safe control circuit which allows the operation control units to monitor a control signal for correctness and if any of the operation control units detect an error, the fail-safe control circuit fails-safe the controlled device by interrupting power thereto.

A fail-safe control circuit is generally provided in control systems to force a controlled device into a safe state when a malfunction occurs and the proper operation of such a fail-safe control circuit is very important when it is concerned with the control of a device affecting people's lives. For example, in an anti-skid brake control for a car, vehicle velocity and wheel rotation are monitored and supplied to an operation control unit such as a microcomputer/microprocessor. When wheel locking is detected, the braking operation is released to prevent the wheels from slipping thereby improving the braking function making it possible to accurately stop the car.

In an anti-skid brake control circuit, it is important to improve reliability, and therefore each control circuit is provided with a plurality of identical operation control units arranged in parallel to process the same input in synchronism with each other using the same clock signal. The operation control units control the controlled device

using an output signal based on majority voting type processing performed on the respective outputs of the operation control units thereby to improve reliability.

5 In circuits arranged in the manner described above, an erroneous signal may be produced by the majority voting circuit when one half or more of the plurality of operation control units operate incorrectly. As a result, it is impossible to
10 determine whether the controlled device is operating correctly in accordance with the control output. In a case where, for example, a disconnection occurs in a solenoid which is the controlled device, the desired controlling operation cannot be performed
15 which may cause a serious accident.

An object of the present invention is to provide a fail-safe control circuit which allows operation control units to check their own outputs and it is another object to prevent erroneous
20 operation when a majority of the operation control units are malfunctioning and to interrupt power to a controlled device whenever a malfunction occurs, thereby putting controlled device in a fail-safe state.

25 According to the present invention, a fail-safe control circuit connected to operational control units producing control signals and to a controlled device, is characterised by detection means for detecting coincidence between the control signals,
30 activating the controlled device when coincidence occurs and producing a feedback signal, each operation control unit producing a disagreement signal when the respective control signal disagrees with the feedback signal, and fail-safe means for
35 placing the controlled device in a fail-safe state when at least one disagreement signal is produced.

The control signals produced by the operation

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control units are thus used to produce a control output signal for controlling the controlled device. The control output signal is fed back to the control units by the fail-safe control circuit, monitored by 5 the operation control units and compared with the control signals produced by the respective units. If any of the control signals do not match the fed back signal, the fail-safe control circuit disengages power to the controlled device forcing it into a 10 fail-safe state.

In the fail-safe control circuit, coincidence between the result of the operations of operation control units is necessary to produce the control output signal, so that control accuracy is improved. 15 Further, since each of the operation control units detects disagreement between its control signal and the fed back signal, the control mode for the controlled device is forced into a fail-safe mode when a disagreement is detected by any of the 20 operation control units. Thus, it is possible to perform fail-safe control while supervising all of the control system including the controlled load.

An example of a circuit constructed in accordance with the invention will now be described 25 with reference to the accompanying diagram.

The figure shows an example of a fail-safe control circuit according to the present invention. Identical operation control units $l_1 - l_n$ receive the same control input signal IN and the same clock 30 signal CP generated by a clock pulse generating circuit 2. Each operation control unit $l_1 - l_n$ normally performs identical processing to produce identical output control signals $A_1 - A_n$ from respective ports P_1 . An AND gate circuit 3 detects 35 coincidence between signals $A_1 - A_n$ and produces a control signal B for controlling a controlled device 4. A transistor 5 is connected between the

controlled device 4 and ground, and has a base receiving the control output signal B through resistor 6. A DC source 7 for energizing the controlled device 4 has a negative pole connected to ground and a positive pole connected to the controlled device 4 through a fail-safe controlling relay 8. An inverter 9 inverts a signal between the controlled device 4 and the transistor 5 to produce a control feedback signal C which is supplied to respective input ports P_2 of the operation control units $l_1 - l_n$. Each of the control units $l_1 - l_n$ compares the feedback signal C with their respective output control signals $A_1 - A_n$ and produces a disagreement detection signal or power interruption control through port P_3 whenever coincidence does not occur. An OR gate circuit 10 receives the disagreement detection signals $D_1 - D_n$ and produces a relay control signal when any one of the operation control units produces a disagreement signal. A transistor 11 is connected between the positive pole of the DC source 7 and ground through a relay coil 8a, and has a base supplied with the output of the OR gate 10 via a resistor 12. A diode for absorbing counter-electromotive force is connected in parallel with the relay coil 8a.

In the above-described fail-safe control circuit, an input signal IN, such as a vehicle speed signal, a wheel rotational speed signal, etc., is applied in common to the operation control units $l_1 - l_n$. The operation control units $l_1 - l_n$ each execute the same program or operation to perform processing based on the received input signal IN. The control units $l_1 - l_n$ operate in synchronism with each other based on the commonly received clock signal CP produced by the clock pulse generating circuit 2. Upon detection of a control indicating condition, such as the slip value of a wheel

exceeding a predetermined reference value, the control units $l_1 - l_n$ produce the output signals $A_1 - A_n$ from their respective ports P_1 . Since the operation control units $l_1 - l_n$ execute processing under the same conditions, the same output signals $A_1 - A_n$ will be produced from the respective operation control units $l_1 - l_n$ when all units are operating in a normal fashion. During normal operation, the control output signal B produced by the AND gate circuit 3 is a high level "H" indicating coincidence between output signals $A_1 - A_n$ of the respective control units $l_1 - l_n$. The transistor 5 is turned on when it receives the control output signal B at its base. When the transistor 5 is turned on, the controlled device 4 is driven by the DC source 7 since the relay contact 8 is normally closed, thus making the anti-skid function effective.

When the transistor 5 is turned on and the controlled device 4 is operating normally, the input signal to the inverter 9 which is at a low level "L" is inverted to produce the control feedback signal C with a high level "H". The feedback signal C is supplied to the respective ports P_2 of the control units $l_1 - l_n$. The control units $l_1 - l_n$ compare the respective control output signals $A_1 - A_n$ with the control feedback signal C, and when disagreement is detected therebetween, the control units $l_1 - l_n$ produce the disagreement detection signals $D_1 - D_n$ which indicate that a malfunction is occurring.

As previously discussed, the operation control units $l_1 - l_n$ are generally microcomputers or microprocessors and simple source code can be provided in such computerized control units that will sample an input on port P_2 , compare the sample to a signal output from port P_1 , and output a disagreement signal through port P_3 whenever the signals do not match. If the control units $l_1 - l_n$ are hard-wired

logic circuits, a comparator can be provided for comparing the two signals and producing a disagreement output signal as necessary.

If only one of the disagreement detection signals $D_1 - D_n$ is produced, the output signal produced by the OR gate circuit 10 is driven to a high level "H". As a result, transistor 11 energizes relay coil 8a, so that the relay contact 8 is opened to cut off power supplied to the controlled device 4 to stop the operation thereof and to bring the controlled device 4 into a fail-safe state.

If a disagreement occurs among the output signals $A_1 - A_n$, the control output signal B is not produced by the AND gate 3, so that the operation of the controlled device 4 is stopped thereby remaining in the fail-safe state. That is, in the fail-safe control circuit, the control output signal B is produced only when the results of operation of all the control units $l_1 - l_n$ are coincident with each other, providing a highly reliable device. The control units $l_1 - l_n$ compare the output signals $A_1 - A_n$ with the control feedback signal C to determine whether the desired control is being obtained, that is, to positively detect a malfunction in the controlled load system including the AND gate 3, the resistor 6, the transistor 5, the controlled device 4, the relay contact 8, the DC source 7, and the lines connecting these parts together. Consequently, control is exercised only when it is possible to perform complete control and the state is automatically changed into a fail-safe state when an abnormal condition occurs in the controlled load system while performing a control operation, resulting in a higher degree of safety and reliability.

As described above, in the fail-safe control circuit according to the present invention, a control

output is sent only when coincidence is detected among all the respective output signals of a plurality control units that are arranged to process the same input signal in synchronism with each other
5 based on the same clock signal. Each of the operation control units detects disagreement between its output signal and a control feedback signal so that when a disagreement detection signal is produced from any one of the operation control units, a
10 fail-safe change-over relay is driven to change-over the control mode into a fail-safe state. Accordingly, the fail-safe control system improves the accuracy of the operation control units as well as the control system including the controlled load.

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CLAIMS

1. A fail-safe control circuit connected to operational control units ($l_1 - l_n$) producing control signals ($A_1 - A_n$) and to a controlled device (4), the fail-safe control circuit being characterised by detection means (3,9) for detecting coincidence between the control signals ($A_1 - A_n$), activating the controlled device (4) when coincidence occurs and producing a feedback signal (C), each operation control unit ($l_1 - l_n$) producing a disagreement signal ($D_1 - D_n$) when the respective control signal ($A_1 - A_n$) disagrees with the feedback signal (C), and fail-safe means (10,11,8) for placing the controlled device (4) in a fail-safe state when at least one disagreement signal ($D_1 - D_n$) is produced.
2. A circuit as in claim 1, wherein the detection means (3) comprises an AND gate (3) connected to the operation control units ($l_1 - l_n$) and the controlled device (4); and an inverter (9) connected to the AND gate (3) and the operation control units ($l_1 - l_n$), and producing the feedback signal (C).
3. A circuit as in claim 2, wherein the detection means (3) further comprises a transistor (5) connected to the AND gate, the inverter (9) and the controlled device (4).
4. A circuit as in any of claims 1 to 3, wherein the controlled device (4) is supplied with power by a power supply (7) and the fail-safe means comprises an OR gate (10) connected to the operation control units ($l_1 - l_n$); and a relay (8) connected to the OR gate (10), the power supply (7) and the controlled device (4), and operated by the OR gate (10) to disconnect power from the controlled device (4).

5. A circuit as in claim 4, wherein the fail-safe means further comprises a transistor (11) connected between the OR gate (10) and the relay (8).

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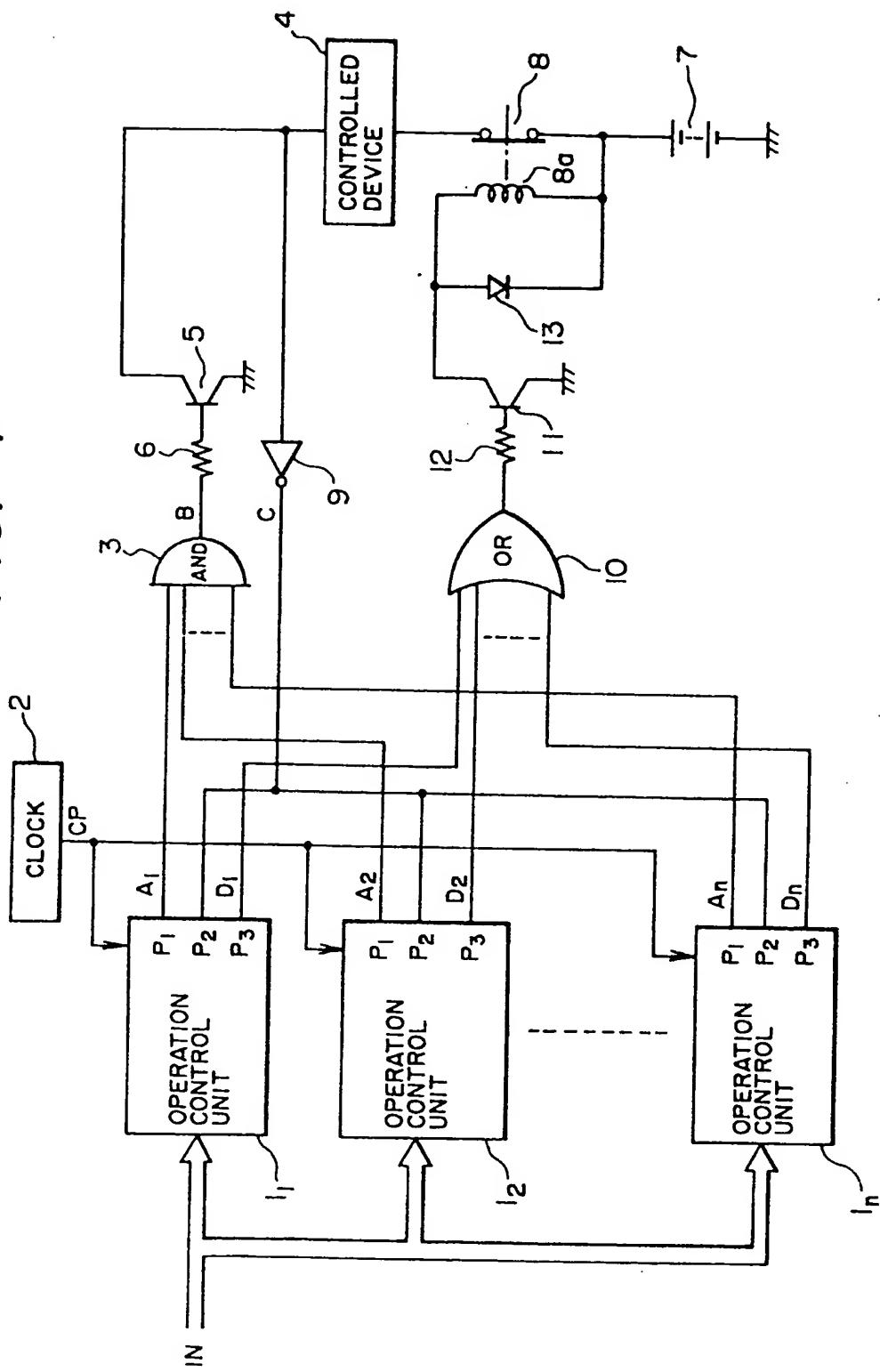
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FIG. 1





EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application number

EP 85 30 8263

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl 4)
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	
X	EP-A-0 115 994 (JEUMONT-SCHNEIDER) * Figures 1,2; abstract *	1-5	G 05 B 9/03 B 60 T 8/00
X	--- GB-A-2 127 507 (TEVES) * Figure 1; claim 1 *	1,4	
A	--- FR-A-2 345 321 (TEVES) * Figure 1; claim 1 *	1,4	
A	--- DE-B-2 932 270 (SEL) * Whole document *	1	
	-----		TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl 4)
			G 05 B B 60 T
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE	Date of completion of the search 11-06-1986	Examiner KOLBE W.H.	
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS		T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document	
X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document			

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